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INTELLIGENCE IN

CPYRGHT

ACTION

By Donald McLachlan

Men of Intelligence: a Study of the Roles and Decisions of Chiefs of Intelligence from World War I to the Present Day. By Major Gen. Sir Kenneth Strong. (Cassell. 50s.)

DO you still believe that it was possible to turn Hitler's troops out of the re-occupied Rhineland in 1936? If so Gen. Sir Kenneth Strong's chapter on French Intelligence at that time, when Col Gauché was in charge of German affairs, should be read at once. The author knew the Colonel as well as the methods of his office, and can therefore judge the value of his work.

Do you think that the Germans had a magnificent intelligence service at work against their chosen enemies in the 1930s? Then read the chapter on Gen. Liss, who was an expert on French mobilisation problems and so was able to advise Hitler on the significance of every reaction from Paris to his moves. Liss has obviously talked to Strong: he must enjoy telling the story of how he showed the French order of battle in November 1939 to Halder, who immediately pointed to the weak spot—the Ninth Army sector before the Ardennes, in which the 1940 campaign was won. Tippleskirch, working against the Russians, did less well.

Have you been brought up to believe that Haig lost the Battle of Cambrai by bad luck? If so it is worth considering this book's study of the brilliant and affable Charteris, who became in 1914 without any training at all the future Field Marshal's chief of intelligence. Was he right to put maintenance of his master's morale before objective judgment?

Where historians of two world wars have almost feared to tread, the former Director General of Intelligence in the Ministry of Defence trudges in a straight line from the Battle of the Marne. Col Hentsch, an intelligence man, gave in 1914 advice which led to the withdrawals of the German First and Second Armies—which we call the victory of the Marne.

The author's friend, John McCone, head of the CIA, took a pessimistic view in 1967 of the Vietcong's capacities. Gen. Westmoreland on the spot rejected this expert advice, was surprised by the Tet offensive and then said "it did not occur to us that the enemy would undertake suicidal attacks in the face of our power." Both on McCone and Allen Dulles the book is personal, interesting and reassuring. Gen. Strong is convinced the CIA is good.

Not unnaturally, most of the personalities and episodes examined in this admirably concise and short book are military. Bill Cavendish-Bentinck of the Foreign Office, however, is rightly singled out for his chairmanship in the second war of the Joint Intelligence Committee. This central assessment of information and opinions about the enemy was something quite new to Whitehall, and Service rivalries made it difficult. Strong is not quite fair to the naval role in this committee: it was to insist again and again, in the teeth of War Office and Air Ministry resistance, on the need for joint Service activity over the whole field.

The author has so much of interest and importance to tell that he could have spared us his lengthy strictures on spies. Let the fiction-writers have their fun! His valuable and readable book might have the effect of persuading our own Service chiefs that Intelligence is a branch of defence which should not be closed to ambitious men and should not be left in the hands of officers for periods of two to three years only.